

BORN  
FROM  
NATURE

[M]METROSPHERE

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# Letter From *The Editor*

I always thought that when I sat down to write this letter, it would be the easiest thing I had ever written. Now, as I sift through multiple failed drafts and look upon the workdays of the last two-and-a-half weeks, it's evident that I made a sincere error in judgment.

I've written letter after letter and paced like a child around those of editors before me, hoping to mirror their command of language, trying to write this letter as they would. But I can't, and how could I ever hope to? I'm not Julia Nguyen or Estevan Ruiz; I can't write this letter as they would.

But I think this dilemma is somewhat fitting, and maybe a little ironic, when I think of "Born From Nature," a theme that holds the concept of individualism—the idea that we must live by our own judgments, in our own skin; not as reflections of others but as individuals of our own capacity—at its heart.

Truthfully, this theme is intentionally broad, also employing concepts like subjectivity and resilience. But most importantly, it's a love letter to individuality and the spirit of nature we have within ourselves, inspired by the literary Transcendental and Romantic eras.

Individualism proposes that we each possess a power within us, fueled by that which makes us who we are, and that to live authentically to ourselves is to harness the fullness of our unique agency—in other words, we cannot do what we do like anyone else and we shouldn't try to because no one else can do it like we do. And I suppose I'm no exception.

I'm not Julia Nguyen or Estevan Ruiz; I really can't write this letter as they would—but no one can. Each individual has their own unique frame of mind from which they live, their own command of what they do. Within these pages, I hope you will find that this is undeniably true. And hopefully, you'll find it's something worth celebrating, too.

Thank you to all the beautifully authentic and real people on the Metrosphere team who have worked on this issue with us and made this adventure worthwhile, and to all the artists and writers who submitted their heart's work to us.

Thank you to Madeline Terlep for being confused and scared with me for the last year as we began this journey as editors together; to Sophie Reese for her brilliant artistry, dedication, and for carrying every aspect of the design for this issue on her back (seriously, Sophie, I cannot thank you enough); and to Adrian Eatman, Christopher DeRosier, and Deanna Hirsch for guiding us through the winding and poorly-lit paths of this venture with a steady hand when ours were shaking.

Whether you've heard of us before or you're holding an issue of Metrosphere now for the first time, I want to thank you too, dear reader. Within these pages is not only a collection of art and literature from MSU Denver students, each individuals of their own, but also a year's worth of work rebuilding our team, re-introducing ourselves to the MSU Denver community, and doing all we have done, in our own unique capacities, to get this very issue in your hands. Thank you for picking it up. Thank you for engaging with our work. It's been a long time coming.

*With creativity and love,*

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Danna Shaffer'.

*Danna Shaffer, Editor-in-Chief*

# VOLUME 41

# MET MEDIA

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EMBRA

THE

CH

ACE

POEM

*Bryan Rustad*

BRYAN  
RUSTAD

Reader, behold! As you pass by,  
as you are now, so once was I:  
Lost in space with a void to fill,  
no place to go while time stands still,  
as reality bends in all directions  
like fractured panes with warped reflections,  
surrounded by terror and stolen hopes, on  
the verge of collapse, no way to cope.

But some people thrive in chaos,  
because chaos is all they know,  
and some people survive the chaos  
and that is how they grow;  
so succumb to the darkness,  
collapse and let destruction reign,  
release all of that collected stress  
and allow yourself to be born again;  
like a nebula becomes a star  
bright and striking from afar,  
as I am now, so you will be,  
therefore, prepare to follow me.

ANGE



After the vigil, the old man behind the piano does not rise from his bench until the last guests have withdrawn from the parlor. The sudden stillness in the room shakes him from his pensive stupor. He stands. Brushes his hands over his tattered suit coat. Crosses the room with a slow, uneven gait.

The casket lies open, lingering in the aisle as if caught in the passageway between the earthly and the eternal. The old man stoops to gaze upon the face of the dead woman, her features rendered yellow by the candlelight, her red, red hair set to flame. Perhaps it is only a mind trick, but there is a familiarity in her expression. In her youth, her placidity, a faint resemblance to a girl from another time.

There was a daughter, once, musical as a nightingale. He remembers flowers in her hair. Though she is gone now, he hunts for her in every face he sees, looking for something to revive in each. He has made a routine of it. When the services are over, he idles in the parlor to pay his respects in the only way he knows how.

The week before, there was a black-haired woman in the box. A certain sweetness in the crescent of her lips had sent a current of remembrance washing over him. He had stroked the keys for her, too, but felt nothing. He could only leave the body to its fate, saddening at the thought of the woman sleeping six feet below; imagining with horror the slow rot of her as she is made a feast for all manner of dreadful, mealy things.

A carcass draws flies, the old man knows. That is its nature. But what he wants is anything but natural. *Today will be different*, he thinks.

The old man tears himself from the casket. Makes his way across the room again. Sits at the keyboard. Ruffles his songbook until he arrives at just the right piece. He tosses a remark over his

shoulder: "Let's have a song, shall we?" His voice breaks over the words he has uttered many a time before, but his eyes are pleasant, crinkled at the corners. "I do hope you've practiced, my dear."

And so, the old man begins to play.

As the bitter tones surround him, he fancies he hears a laugh, clear and ringing. Music can resurrect. It can draw memory from a vein as precisely as a thread from a needle's eye. White teeth. Green glare. A glint of pale gold. He is taken in by the fragments of a past life. A mellow spring day. Wilting irises in a vase on the mantle. Sun streaking across the floorboards of a cool room. A sprite of a girl on the bench beside him, limbs dangling, pink toes inching toward a slim beam of light. The duet is *magnificent*. She has much still to learn but her hands glide alongside his own, almost effortless. They are two souls vibrating at an identical frequency.

He has no way of knowing that this is her final lesson.

The last echoes of laughter are still fading, melting into silence when the melody comes to a close. Memory has a nearly unshakeable grip, and it has followed the old man into the here and now, where reality is blurred. He feels a breath on his neck and a chill in the air. Phantom fingers on the keyboard. The chemical scent in the room has grown sharper, rousing his senses. The old man turns his head, half-expecting an empty casket, a ghost in the aisle.

*Nothing*. All is quiet. The dust remains unsettled. The woman in the box has not stirred from her slumber. She is deader than ever, like all the rest of them.

*Oh well*, he thinks, and lifts his hands off the keys. *Better luck next time*.

# THE PIANO LESSON

SARIYA CAMP

# STARS

Crawling back out from the forest,  
mouth of bark and branches,  
from what nearly seems like surrender. Feeling teeth  
in nakedness and prophecy in moonshine.  
The stars at night split your body in two,  
hang from their sky of shattering glass,  
dancing and piercing through you from within.  
They cut like a glint of light against the blade.  
You were stolen out of your bed and drowned  
before morning, broken and dumped in the river,  
believed to be dead, at least dead enough to leave,  
under stars who stood and watched above you.

SAMANTHA FORSYTH

# ABRAHAM MEJIA RAMIREZ

**A**braham Mejia Ramirez (He/Him) is a Mexican-American Denver-based artist who often reflects on his family roots in Zacatecas, Mexico. His artwork typically focuses on his own identity and explores personal experiences using a wide range of mediums. These include painting, ceramics, textiles, and so on. He is currently earning his art education BFA at Metropolitan State University of Denver with an emphasis on painting and ceramics.

Ramirez has exhibited his paintings at the Center for Visual Arts Gallery. He was also an officer for the painting club at MSU Denver, People With Paintbrushes, in 2021 and worked on a painting for the 2021 spring graduation ceremony. Ramirez has also worked in art education programs for several non-profit arts organizations in the Denver metro area.





# ARTS

~  
**ESCAPISM**

Oil on Canvas  
Abraham Mejia Ramirez



"Hold me up into the light and  
study every part of me.  
I'm an open book, no, I don't mind,  
but sometimes I'm hard to read.  
Just flesh and bone, I'm headed  
home, but this life is so hard to leave.  
But who am I when they cut the  
lights and nobody's watching me?"  
– Excavate (Ft. Saint Claire)  
by Macklemore

America

When my mother and I came to you seeking refuge and a way for me to finish my education, we may have carried only a backpack, suitcase, and a duffle bag each, but the baggage we felt weighed down on us long after we'd set our things down and tried to reorganize our lives.

ourselves and our bags with the sheer power of our wills, somehow managing to get on the bus.

Even when we made it on the train, we sat in silent composure, trying not to cry. At every train station, it felt like eyes were on us as we prayed we wouldn't get caught.

When my mother and I finally made it to the safe room her friend had prepared for us, we sank onto the floor and cried.

Everything we knew about our life so far had been dismantled, and in that small square patch, all of our fears and pain emerged while the silent knowing our life was about to look very different sunk in.

Still, we had to keep moving, so we wiped away our tears and pushed onward to the airport.

I was seventeen years old then.

I can still vividly recall looking down from high above at the vast expanse of fields through the airplane window with a child-like curiosity, not knowing what to anticipate from my new life. Everything was unknown to me, both beautiful and disturbed. And while I am a citizen of the United States, I had no prior connection to the land until I came here.

As I sat with the words, it reminded me of the importance of vulnerability in my life. Of shedding layers and allowing myself to be cracked open to allow the light to seep in. So, I decided to share the story of how I came to this beautiful state and the roots of my creativity. I hope in doing so, more people will feel encouraged to let the world see them in their totality.

I can still remember it all

The last time I saw my sister's face, we pretended it was a normal day, swallowing back tears. Squeezing my cat, I silently let tears roll onto her forehead and wiped the snot from my nose.

My father somehow slept through it all as we scurried out of the house and hastily rolled our suitcases down the hill, hearts pounding with adrenaline while rain poured down mercilessly.

As the rain continued to beat down, my mother and I pulled

So here I am, sharing an excerpt from my piece titled "An Open Letter to America," written about moving to Colorado.

JULI YANAI

In this way, I have often felt like an unofficial immigrant, not fitting neatly into any category.

I consider myself lucky to have been welcomed with open arms on the other side, but nothing could have prepared me for the confusion and grief of losing a life I once knew.

I have spent entire days becoming one with the floor and shedding tears, criticizing my body for holding onto memories not aligned with my current reality. Isolation and shame were two friends I knew very well, often consuming me as I holed up in my room, observing people from a distance.

For many years, I have taken the time to unbottle emotions I held back from expressing.

I have since learned to hold compassion for my body and its reflexes, ingrained from many years of experience.

And while there are moments where I still struggle to speak, feeling the words get caught before my throat can even make an attempt, I am no longer shaming myself for taking the time I need to learn how to feel safe in my body and existence.

There are still moments when

guilt tries to catch me and say, "Dreams are foolish, and you must be practical. After all, everyone made sacrifices for you."

But I've learned to acknowledge that voice and remind her that the most beautiful gift I can give those who have loved me is to tend to myself with the same care they have, to flourish truly. I have chosen to honor everyone who has helped me create a home for myself in this world in a way that honors myself and the creative spirit.

And when I tell people's stories through still moments frozen in time, compilations of film, drawing, or whatever medium "feels right" in the moment, it is because they have taught me about the extraordinary magic that exists within seemingly common circumstances, and I want the world to see.

I want the world to see the magic in stories of people like my mother and the stranger who talked to me in that Uber three years ago or the best friends I've made in college and reflect back the light they've so graciously shined on me, even in moments where I had difficulty seeing how I could deserve so much unconditional love.

Signed,  
Your [Un]official immigrant





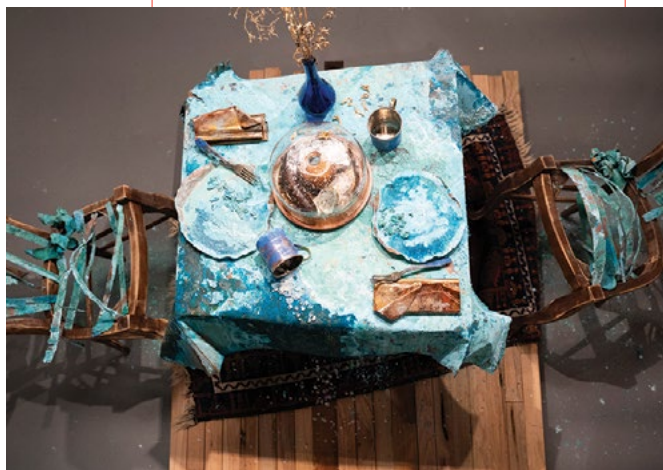
### CB SERIES

Patina on copper  
Erica Rawson



### I MOVED GROUND AND DUST TO KEEP YOU HERE

Patina on copper, found objects,  
rotting fruit • 70 x 70 x 48 in  
Erica Rawson



### RUST

Oil, steel, wool, copper  
58 x 24 x 48 in  
Erica Rawson

# NOTHINGNESS

NICOLE LONGCRIER

G-d sits in those sounds, those moments  
 G-d exists in the space between souls  
 The silence on snow-capped peaks,  
 Power from roaring of flowing falls  
 The pull of the oceans magnet.  
 The electricity in a kiss,  
 The wail of new life  
 Silence of absent breath.  
 G-d sits in those sounds.  
 Deep within flowing blood,  
 In dew drops  
 Of petals bright.  
 G-d sits.  
 Life,  
 Love  
 Death.  
 G-d.

When the autumn wind rustles  
 the foliage, I'm reminded of how  
 the present is a gift that's hard  
 to unwrap at the right moment.  
 Time is like a ghost or a yellow  
 leaf, or the shadow of a witch  
 flying her broomstick across the  
 moon; at the same time that I see  
 her here, you see her there. The  
 nature of me is the nature of the  
 changing Aspens, the mountain  
 skyline, and of each skeleton  
 I pass on a crisp evening. We  
 weather the seasons and return  
 every year the same as the last,  
 but different.

# IN THE MIDST OF TIME

ANNIE TERRY

## MY HOLY TRANSFORMATION

LILIANA GUERRERO

Costa Rica, me recibió  
La tierra, tembló  
El Mar Pacífico, me conoció  
La tierra, tembló  
Mi santo el 18 de enero, paso  
La pócima que me dio, me durmió  
Mi conciencia, se desplazo  
La bestia, me mutilo  
Mi corazón, se paro  
Mi Santa Muerte, me encontró  
Mi plegaria, escucho  
De mí, se apiado  
Otra oportunidad, me concedió  
Del inframundo, me saco  
Mi alma, aterrizo  
Mi respiración, volvió  
Madre Tierra, se enfureció  
Mi ojo, abrió  
El mar, se escucho  
El sol, ardió  
La venda de mis ojos, disolvió  
La bestia, se vio  
Mi corazón, se quebró  
La bestia del cuarto, salió  
Mi sangre en la ducha, fluyo  
La bestia, volvió

Costa Rica, she received me  
The earth, it shook  
The Pacific Ocean, she greeted me  
The earth, it shook  
My birthday, the 18th of January, it came  
The potion he gave me, it put me to sleep  
My consciousness, it faded  
The beast, he mutilated me.  
My heart, it stopped  
My Holy Death, she found me  
My plea, she listened to it  
For me, she had pity  
Another opportunity to live, she gave me  
From the underworld, she rescued me  
My soul, it returned  
My breathing, it restarted.  
Mother Earth, she was furious  
My eye, she opened  
The sea, I heard it  
The sun, he burned  
My blindfold, he scorched  
The beast, I saw him  
My heart, it broke  
The beast from the room, he left  
My blood in the shower, it flowed  
The beast, he returned



# SANTA TRANSFORMACIÓN



Mi boca, callo  
 La mariposa a la crisálida, se metió  
 Y fuerza para sobrevivir, saco  
 La tierra, temblo  
 El piso, se movió  
 Costa Rica, me despidió  
 El pájaro de acero a mi patria, me regreso  
 La Pandemia, llego  
 Mi tolerancia, termino  
 Mi mente, se nublo  
 El hospital, me interno  
 La resonancia magnética, la conmoción  
 cerebral enseño  
 Mi resultado medico mi doctora a la  
 policía, reporto El oficial mi reporte, tomo  
 La bestia, huyo  
 El divorcio al juez, llego  
 La bestia los hechos, negó  
 La justicia y la responsabilidad, evadió  
 El juez el divorcio, firmo  
 Después de 19 años, mi vida, libero  
 La mariposa regenerada, nació  
 y con alas doradas bajo la luz de la luna lila  
 con la frente en alto, voló.

My mouth, he silenced.  
 The butterfly into the chrysalis, she entered  
 And the strength to survive, she birthed  
 The earth, it shook  
 The floor, it moved  
 Costa Rica, she said goodbye to me  
 The bird of steel to my homeland, it returned me  
 The Pandemic, it arrived  
 My tolerance, it expired  
 My mind, it clouded  
 The hospital, it checked me in  
 The MRI, the concussion it showed  
 My medical results my  
 doctor to the police, she reported The official my  
 report, he took  
 The beast, he fled  
 The divorce to the judge, it arrived  
 The beast the blame, he denied  
 Justice and responsibility for his actions, he evaded  
 The judge the divorce, he signed  
 After 19 years, my life, he liberated  
 The butterfly now renewed, was born  
 And with her golden wings under the light of the lilac moon  
 With her head held high, she flew.

# ASHLEY CABRERA

In the heart of nature's canvas, scars like us,  
Manitou stands, a soul both fierce and fair,  
A cut, made from man, into the earth, a trust  
Of strength and will, a challenge divine souls dare.

The Manitou calls out to those who seek,  
She beckons to them with a silent grace,  
To scale her heights, both rugged and unique,  
Why climb a mile-long  
Stairway  
Into  
The  
Heavens?

To seek a fragment of their past, perhaps,  
To heal their future through the journey's grasp,  
The magnitude of her profound stillness,  
A sacred space where time stands still, divine.  
In landscapes, scars and beauty intertwined,  
The Manitou Incline, a gift of time.

## ECHOES OF MANITOU: THE ASCENT BEYOND TIME

# COSMIC REVERIE

## Cosmic Reverie: We Are Stardust

In the vast cosmic dance, a wondrous art,  
Margaret Burbidge's wisdom set us apart,  
Atoms in our bodies, a cosmic birthright,  
Tracing back to stars, a celestial flight.  
From the crucible deep in the stellar core,  
Nitrogen, iron, carbon, elements galore,  
Born in thermonuclear fusion's embrace,  
Stars' fiery hearts, their celestial grace.  
Explosions in cosmic fireworks grand,  
Scatter enrichment across the land,  
Into the gas clouds, the nursery of stars,  
From dust and gas, a universe truly ours.  
So when you gaze upon the night's vast sea,  
Feeling small in the cosmic mystery,  
Remember, within you, the stars abide,  
In every atom, a universe inside.  
The universe lives within your frame,  
You, a part of its celestial flame,  
Poetically and literally, stardust we are,  
Connected to the cosmos, near and far.  
In the grand cosmic scheme, we play a part,  
With the universe's song in our hearts,

For we are not just stardust, you see,  
We are the universe, and the universe is in me.

# WRITER

# SPOOKY

Sunlight peeks through the thin gap of drawn curtains, casting a fragile glow onto the dim walls. The apartment's lone window muffles the outside noise of the lively city soundscape. A young man lies on a brown, velvet couch. Clutching a pillow, he is weeping.

"We're all going to die!" squawked Ficus.

"The curtains have been closed for weeks. Jade will surely not survive such conditions, and Fern's leaves are dropping by the hour!" wailed Pothos.

"SILENCE!"

The trunks of the Bamboo family shook in vexation. Their gob of roots had absorbed the last of the liquid from the rocks within their glass dwelling. Not even the elders had ever experienced their Keeper in such distress.

"We mustn't panic," echoed the bamboo family in uncanny unison.

"Although to us Keepers seem immortal in their divine nature, they too can droop and rot. If our Keeper is unable to tend to his own needs, he will certainly not be tending to ours."

Gazing down upon their Keeper, all of the plants' roots collectively throbbed at the sight of his wet face.

ALYSSA WILLIAMS

A WARM  
EMBRACE

# CONTEST WINNERS

"Maybe he needs a warm embrace," offered String of Hearts. Her elegant tendrils trailed from the ceiling and hovered parallel to the wall, dangling above the Keeper. "Brilliant!" the Elders cried out.

A buzz of excitement swept across the room, the first bout of optimism in weeks.

"Why stop there?" purred Devil's Ivy. "This may be our only chance. All trailing plants should engage in the entwinement."

\*\*\*

The stream eventually ran dry, and the Keeper's breath slowed to a steady, even pace. With great care, Ric-Rac Cactus zig-zagged over and under the Keeper's slender fingers. Ric-Rac moved in a careful pattern around the wrists and up the forearms. Harnessing the Keeper's chest, String of Hearts glided down and around thick corset of marbled, heart-shaped leaves. String of Pearls approached the Keeper's throat,

lacing taut loops until the Keeper was fitted in a choker of shrunken, emerald pearls. She coiled with increasing intensity, using every ounce of her available strength.

The Keeper's eyes fluttered open in a confused daze.

Spider Plant wound round and round the Keeper's head. Gaining momentum, he sprouted new growth deep into the Keeper's nostrils.

The Keeper writhed under the bind of the vines. A sound of torment escaped his lips and echoed throughout the room.

Hoya trailed down from her pot. Her fresh blooms filled the Keeper's mouth, muffling his cries for help.

\*\*\*

A soft knock sounds at the front door of the studio apartment. It's the annual Highrise Halloween Haunt and children are scattered about the halls.

"TRICK-OR-TREAT!"

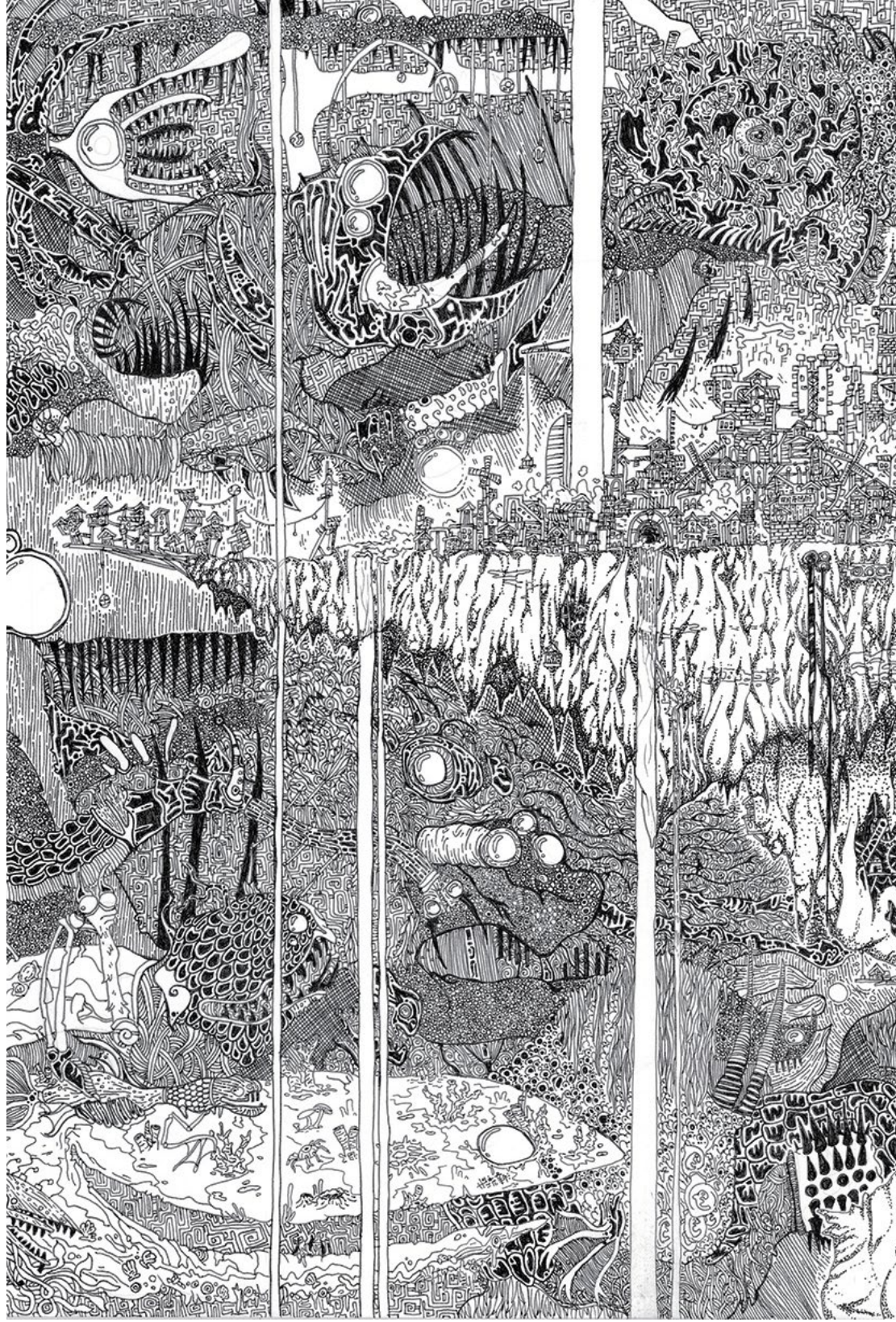
A small angel and a bloodied doctor hear the anguished cries coming from inside. They exchange bewildered glances. Cautiously testing the door handle, they find that it's unlocked.

Peering through the cracked door, they catch a glimpse of the bound arms of a young man. Plastic pumpkins in hand, they make their way inside the apartment. Their small fingers peel back the vines to reveal a pallid face.

The plants look on in horror as the children make quick work of tearing away their laborious efforts.

Leaning over, the angel hovers her ear above the young man's mouth. A gentle wisp of breath tickles her ear.









## Lonely City, Waiting Man

Ink on Paper  
Joshua Steele

# CHANGING OF THE SEASONS

I had never felt so alone before. Trapped in a world I knew but a place I didn't.

It was snowy.

The kind of snowy that silenced everything in the night. The kind of snowy that looked like time slowed when you caught a glimpse of the flakes falling in the light of the street lamps. The kind of snowy that told you school was canceled tomorrow.

It wasn't cold. I was too brave to be cold.

A sigh escaped my lips, one I could see in the form of a puffy cloud. I just stood. The world was still, so I felt I must be, too. I let snowflakes fall into my hair and fill my lashes, but couldn't even bring myself to blink.

For the first time in a long time, I felt at peace.

The memory of childhood washed over me. Times where I would see snow like this and throw an ice cube into the toilet, calling it a snow day already. Where I could sit in front of the TV all day wrapped in my blanket, but instead of watching what was on, I would watch the snowfall.

Those days felt so far gone.

## THE FIRST SNOW

— ALICE MORELAND



# CONTEST WINNER

Winter used to feel different. It used to bring smiles, sledding, snow angels... hot cocoa. But now it is being terrified of driving and cursing at the ice on my windshield that just won't scrape off.

But here, in the snow, I felt like a kid again. I stood in an unfamiliar spot, soaking it in. I didn't feel lost at all. No seasonal depression. No daylight savings. No growing up—just silent snow. I had never been this alone before, and I had never felt a smile tug on my lips as hard as that one did in that moment.

I was small. Wrapped in a puffy coat, making me look like a mini marshmallow. Snow fell around me as I lay on the ground, and I blinked the cold flakes out of my eyes. My laugh sounded happy again. I couldn't stop giggling as I made an angel on the ground under me. Cold ice was melting in my sleeve, but I didn't mind.

When did snow ever feel like this?

Why doesn't it feel like this anymore?

"Honey! Come on inside, you're gonna freeze."

Mom.

I sat up and smiled, feeling the familiar warmth of my bed. The smile faded and turned into a yawn as I spotted my cat lying beside me. She mewed at me, curling up on my lap to watch me check the time. Only 11:30.

Before I could lie back down in disappointment, though, my gaze reached the window.

First snow of the year.

I smile.

"Wanna go make some hot cocoa with me?" I ask my cat.



# NATURE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Emily lived in a cottage seemingly in the middle of nowhere, raised by evergreens and snowfall. She wasn't wealthy, but she didn't need to be. Not when she lived a mere quarter mile away from the village where everything she ever needed had been.

Emily felt blessed.

Emily was happy.

She yawned and pulled herself out of bed, feeling her long, red hair pour down her back like a

flaming waterfall. From across the room, a large St. Bernard howled quietly as his tail shook back and forth in pure excitement. Emily walked to the dog and petted the top of his head.

"Good morning, Art," she whispered. "Would you like to go outside?"

Art responded with a soft huff, following Emily to the backdoor. He fought back the urge to bite at Emily's flowing nightgown as it dragged on the floor behind her.

When Emily opened the door, she noticed the light dusting of snow atop the dying grass in her backyard, and she smiled. It snowed while she slept. She knew that wouldn't be the end of it either. It was going to snow in the afternoon. She could feel it.

Turning to her calendar, she circled the 21st of December in bright red ink. The winter solstice. Only a few more hours.

"Art, stop fooling around," she called. "Come inside!"

The handsome dog – who was once rolling in the snow like an idiot – looked up with his bright pink tongue hanging out of his smiling mouth, and Emily couldn't help but giggle. "Are you ready for the solstice, my love?" she asked as Art walked in, allowing Emily to wipe his wet paws with a hand towel.

She didn't mind the lack of response. She was used to it by now. The gleeful look on Art's

## SOLSTICE

ALICE MORELAND

# CONTEST WINNERS

face was all she needed. He probably didn't even know what the solstice was. After all, he was only eight months old. Emily was just excited to share the experience with someone new. "Let's go to town. Get prepared for tonight."

Emily grabbed a rope to use as a leash for Art and set it down on the table. "Don't get too excited." She poked his wet nose with her index finger. "I still have to freshen up. I shouldn't be long, though!"

And, in fact, she wasn't. Emily's long hair was pulled into a quick, messy braid, and her nightgown was traded for a day dress and a belted coat with fur-cuffed sleeves. She chuckled when she saw Art's look of anticipation.

"Okay, okay. I won't leave you waiting any longer than you have to." Emily neatly tied the rope to Art's collar, and the two took to the village.

It wasn't a very lively town. No one greeted each other, and even busy

markets were silent besides the soft whispers of "excuse me" or the sound of coins being fiddled with in cotton pockets. As Emily walked down the street or into small shops, she received odd stares, but most of those were directed at poor Art.

As she browsed, Emily didn't find much that caught her eye. She did see a Yule Log at a bakery but didn't have nearly enough money to buy it. Browsing quickly became a bore, so she finally walked into the candle shop she meant to stop into first to get what she had actually come into town for.

Art sneezed as they walked in, and Emily apologized quietly. She didn't want anything that would irritate Art, so she opted for six unscented, tall, white candles.

As Emily had thought earlier that day, snow began to fall from the gray sky above as she exited the shop. Art immediately became excited, and he started snapping

at the snowflakes as they drifted toward him. Emily, however – with little to no expression – walked back home, dragging Art along with her.

On the short walk back, she collected old sticks and dead leaves, putting them in the bag with the candles. The small snowflakes grew in size and started to turn the red of Emily's hair completely white.

The snow made her feel at home. Winter wasn't just a season for Emily. It was something more. Winter was part of her creation, part of who she was. Snow felt like the embrace of family, and the cold made her feel alive, made her feel something.

Stepping back into the cottage, both Emily and Art shook their coats off, but Emily was the only one to hang hers.

Emily put a kettle on the stove and made space for herself on the kitchen floor to work. She pulled out the candles, sticks, and leaves and grabbed some twine from the closet. Art lay respectfully beside her, watching curiously as Emily tied the sticks together in the shape of a circle, making sure to delicately intertwine the dead leaves as well.

The kettle squealed, so Emily jumped up to finish making her tea. Art was trying to figure out what the candles were for in the meantime.

She sipped out of her mug but retracted due to the heat and set it aside for when it cooled. The candles were then tied to the circle of sticks and leaves.

A smile crept onto Emily's lips when she looked at the finished product.

A beautiful crown.

— — —

The winter solstice marked death and rebirth. The sun – who was to die in November – grew stronger, more resilient. The beginning of winter only represented how close one was to one's growth. If not for winter, there would be no spring; if not for death, there would be no life.

Emily traveled into the woods when the clock struck twelve, and the solstice had arrived. The wax of her crown was dripping onto the snow-covered dirt. Art followed closely behind, shaking newly fallen snow off of his back every few minutes. Emily wasn't surprised her candles didn't go out.

She didn't know how long they

had been traveling, nor did she know where they were headed, but that made the night more fun for her anyway.

"Art, I hope you're not too tired, dear," Emily whispered.

She got no response, but it was different that time. Shock.

Emily turned to find Art frozen. There wasn't fear, nor was there sadness or anger. There wasn't anything.

Emily smiled and took a step forward.

A tall creature covered in a cloak stood, staring at the moon.

"It's you," Emily said.

"It's you." the creature responded.

"Happy winter."

The creature chuckled, and its horns were hauntingly silhouetted, reaching for the dark sky above. "I suppose it is that time again, isn't it?"

"It is. Are you going to miss it?"

"Miss what?" The creature looked at Emily with glowing eyes.

"The moon."

"It will still be there."

"Just not as long."

"You're right. Not as long. So, yes. I will miss it."

"Is it time?" Emily asked.

"It is." With a sigh, the creature lurched toward Emily and put out one candle at a time on her crown using the tips of its long fingers. It leaned down to Emily's face and put its hands on both of her shoulders. It turned to look at Art, leaving one candle on Emily's crown lit. "You brought a friend this time."

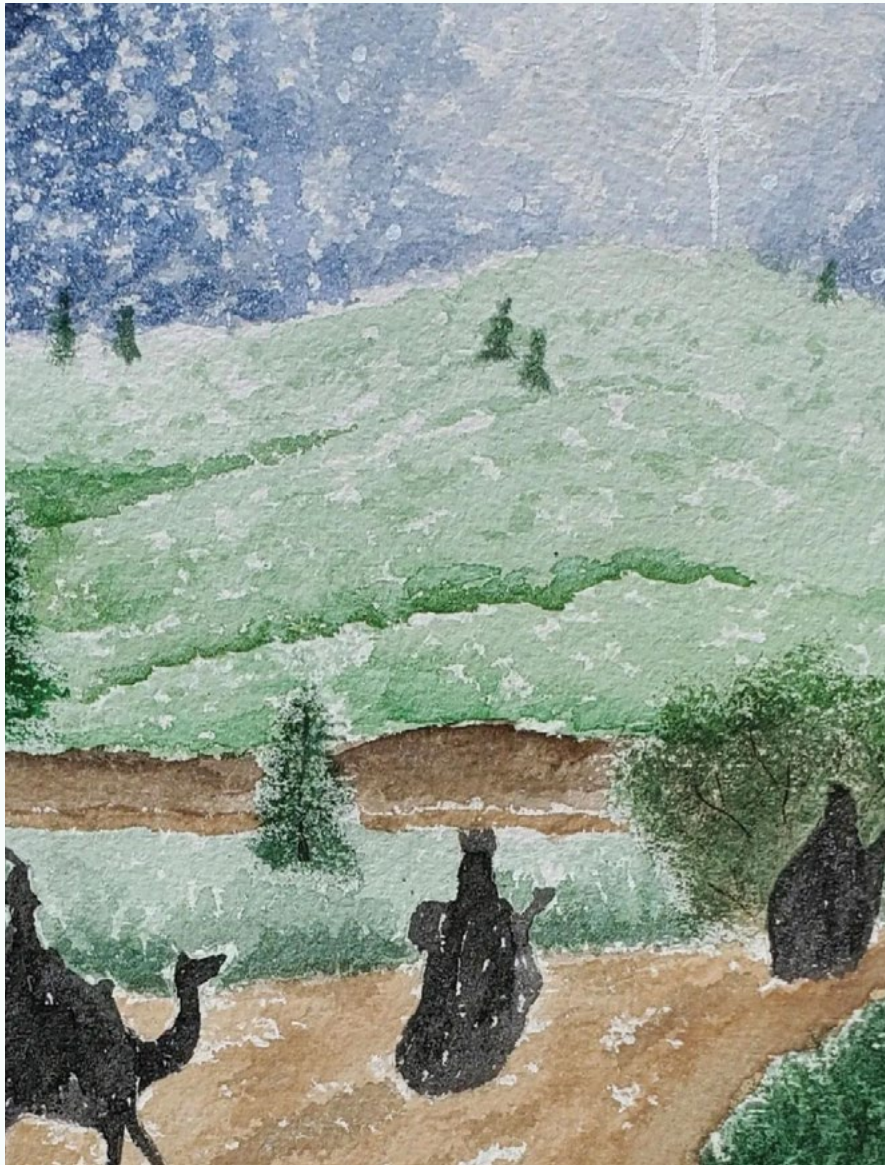
"Everyone needs a friend," Emily said, bringing Art to her side.

"Plus, I shouldn't be the only one allowed to be here with you."

The creature hummed in response, and Emily felt the soft press of its lips to her forehead as the last candle went out.

"Happy birthday, Emily," it said.

Emily saw its dark figure disappear into the night. She sat in the snow and watched the moon, letting herself be covered from head to toe.



**FOLLOWING HOME**

Water Color  
Joshua Carpenter



**A**rtist, student, and visionary Raymond Seeman displayed his powerful skill of fragmentation in his three works of art; “Self Growth,” “What’s Left,” and “Somewhere, Sometime.”

He began his journey in art at 18, after being inspired by a professor to attend art school. Seeman’s unique art form developed after completing a portrait of a loved one. He was proud of his representation, but it lacked the complexity behind the person.

**“It didn’t contain all the multitudes of her; it was a flat representation that didn’t have all the beauty behind the wrinkles,”**

This prompted him to look for a way to portray the depth of the human consciousness on a 2D medium. He discovered through collage combined with oil painting, he could depict all the details of society that help make up the complexities of a human.

**“I like to think about it like society at large as a body, and we’re all fragments that make up culture,”**

He uses collages as a literal representation of the media people consume daily, which in turn helps build the pieces of their personalities. These forms of media form the background and integral parts of his artworks, showcasing the importance they play in the creation of not only humans but also society and culture.

Seeman believes combining fragments of media can then form fragments of human identity.

Humans are not single self-evident creatures, he explained, they are a multitude of facets and are different in each piece. Only with the thorough study of his work can observers truly see all the aspects that go into making them, as is the case with human beings.

His works’ staggered and fragmented parts may seem broken, but instead, they tell the story of his subject traversing through life. Showing more than a single-dimensional representation of the person he is trying to share

Creating a work complex enough to capture the human experience is at least a full-time job. Seeman spent 40 hours completing a single work of his collection.

To begin, he builds the collage. He collects materials from subjects when they are available. Some subjects have their own media to include, collected from their own family history. Such inclusions add immense meaning to the works because they are not built on random clippings of paper but true forms of media and literature that helped form the backbone of a person’s life.

# COLLAGING SOCIETY’S FRAGMENTS

HALEY WILLIAMS

# FEATURED ARTIST



## SELF GROWTH

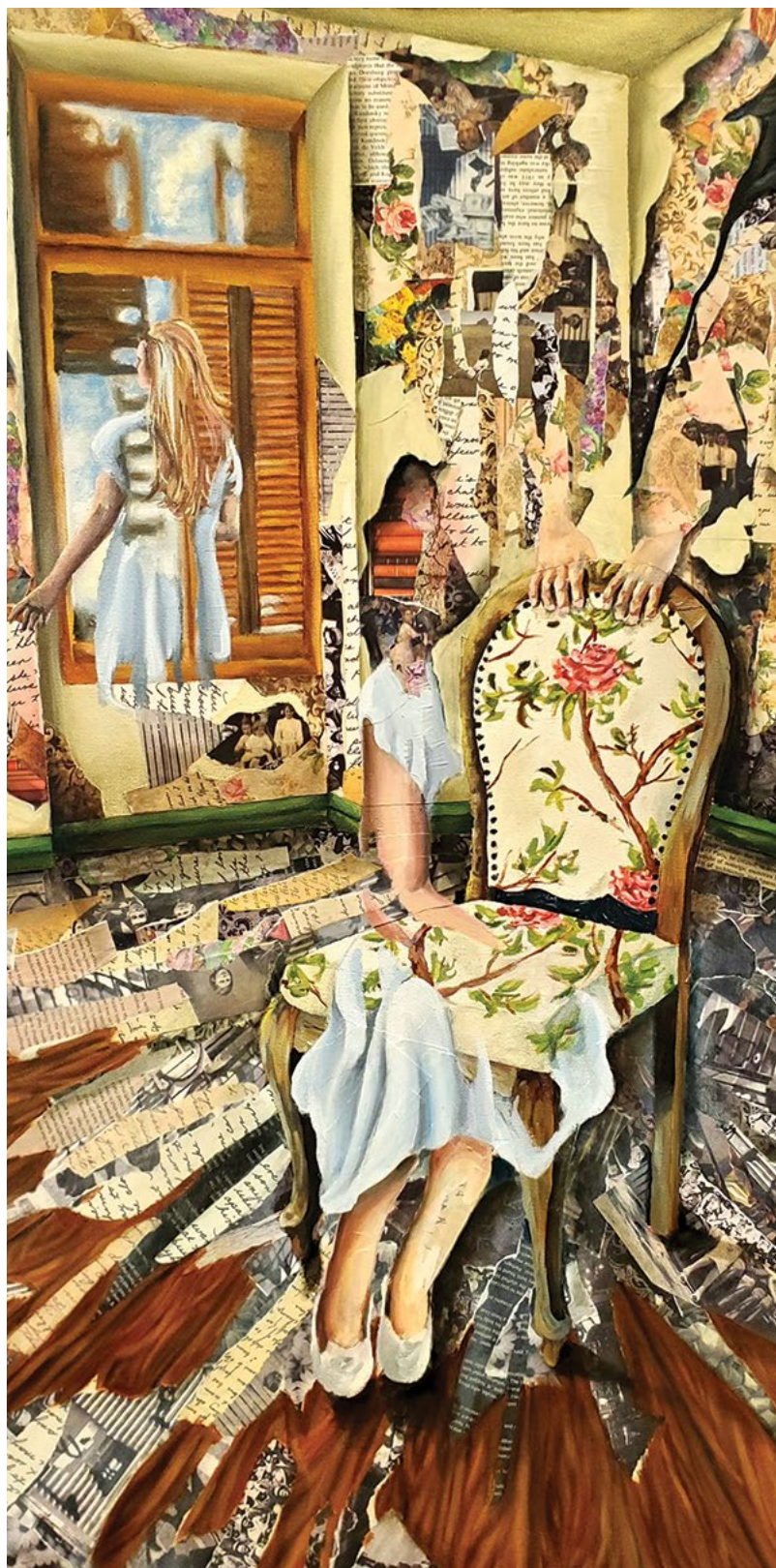
Oil and collage  
Raymond Seeman

Of course, such precious pieces of history are not always available, but Seeman can compensate using letters and clippings found at estate sales or thrift stores. He's also turned to tearing up old textbooks and whatever else he can get his hands on to continue developing the beautiful amalgamation of his works.

Seeman's care for selecting the media included in the collages is evident, especially in "Somewhere, Sometime." The specific use of media portrays feminine and dainty writing, illuminating the woman's character in the painting. It is combined perfectly with the delicate details of the chair centered in the work.

After forming the collage details of a piece, he covers it in layers of clear gesso to protect the paper. When using oil-based paints, artists must practice caution. The oil paint could cause damage to the paper if applied directly, so the clear gesso prevents the two from ever touching.





The development of the human subjects in Seeman's paintings stems from real references, but the story they tell is built solely by Seeman.

He spoke of his original inspiration, which came after seeing an Andrew Wyeth painting from 1948 titled "Christina's World." Seeman saw the girl in the painting and wondered what her life with her family would be like inside the house depicted in the distance of the painting.

Seeman captures this girl's imagined moments in life in his works "What's Left" and "Somewhere, Sometime," the latter being his personal favorite.

Seeman reminds us that humanity is as complicated as his expressive art through these works, built off countless pieces of history and culture.



## SOMEWHERE SOMETIME

Oil and collage  
Raymond Seeman





**“All pieces of our lives  
really just make us  
who we are. And  
these fragments can’t  
really be ignored,”**

With his subjects captured in the movements of their lives, fragments make a whole, as society’s fragments move us through our lives and make us whole.

#### WHAT’S LEFT

Oil and collage  
Raymond Seeman



new message



to: sra.journalist@thecwc.com

from: noreply@web.com

subject: So you want to meet a vampire?

[location pin] 7 pm Sept 29th.]

Daniel shouldn't go, probably. But the pin is a bar in the heart of downtown, barely four blocks from him. It would be so easy. And he's been told he's wrong about the supernatural *so often*.

It's a hard thing, taming curiosity.

So Daniel puts on his chucks and a light jacket and steps into the fall air at 6:40.

Five minutes to sundown.

As soon as he enters the bar- a classy blend of dark wood and smooth jazz, tied together with leather barstools- the world goes a bit fuzzy, like all of a sudden reality is just out of reach and nothing can go wrong.

*"Come to the corner."*

AVIEN HOWELL

# A CHIMING IN THE NIGHT



It's not a voice he'd ever heard before, it's not a voice he'll ever hear outside the confines of his mind.

*I asked for this*, Daniel reminds himself through the fog that's overtaken his mind, and makes his way to the corner booth, where a tall woman dips her head in greeting.

"So," he wastes no time, pulling out his notebook, "vampires?"

The woman laughs, silently, a dull ringing fills the air as she shakes with it.

"You aren't very subtle," she says, the words slipping through Daniel's mind, "I'm Lucy."

Daniel cringes, "Is the whole," he stutters on the word, "telepathy thing necessary?"

"You want a story, correct?" Lucy asks, rather than speaks, suddenly somber.

Daniel clicks his jaw shut against his protests, against the alarms muffled in his mind. *For the story*, he thinks, flips his notebook open and clicks his pen.

Lucy runs a finger around the rim of her glass, some gimmicky Halloween drink,

*"They put a bell in my throat, when I died.*

*They said it's for a blessing. I think it is so I can not curse them.*

*Now every sound out of my mouth is a chime, a tingling. A perversion of a laugh.*

*I will never forget, when I woke up. Grave dirt sprinkling my clothes, coffin bent in under the pressure of soil. I scrambled at the lid, at the earth, at my throat because I tried to scream. I tried so so hard to scream and all that came out was the twinkling, chiming sound.*

*I live a nightmare."*

She picks up her drink, takes a sip. Her throat makes a dull clank sound with every swallow, "You see, Daniel, I have been silenced for so long."

She leans forward, like a predator fixated on prey, "You... you could fix that."

The world goes sharper, for a moment, the fog fading as something in Daniel pings. *It's real. She's*

*I'm in danger.*

Lucy smiles at him, a crook of lips and a flash of teeth. Fangs.

"Just tell my story," she twirls her glass, amused, "I may even reward you."

Her tone is a balm, and the fog returns. He nods, flips the notebook to a fresh page, taking down what she tells him.

Daniel wakes up at 6:45pm September 30th with the worst hangover of his life, no memory of the last 24 hours, and a notebook of the best tale he's ever told. He smiles in self-satisfaction as he flips through the pages, new fangs unnoticed, glinting in the setting sun.

# spit

ELLA TOUPIN

My brothers and I  
refuse to shake  
this habit:  
I spit—  
aiming for  
sidewalk cracks,  
thinking of my  
mother's garden  
where our  
cigarettes burn  
each flower petal.  
I wonder  
if they will ever  
recover, if  
we will ever find  
some other plot  
to rest in,  
if our spit will ever  
reach those roots, searching  
for some other sun  
to grow for.

**T**he black cat yowled from the street where it lay unmoving, and the car sped away.

We could hear it from inside the house, which meant the whole neighborhood could hear it, too. My stepfather went out to investigate and came back weeping the way angry men weep. I hid myself away and wondered what the anger would find. My mother suggested we call animal control but the incessant yowling was getting louder and my stepfather said it would take too long, and it was better to kill the cat himself. So he went out to the shed and got an ax and carried it out to the street and beheaded the animal right there, in front of everyone, the whole neighborhood. The ax split the asphalt and there was blood and silence, complete and certain silence.

My mother was deeply embarrassed by this – the publicity of the execution, the fact of witnesses, of who knows how many other mothers and stepfathers and children watching from their yards and windows, grateful they would never be in our particular situation, since our stepfather was the only one on the block with twelve concussions from college football. My stepfather put the ax back in the shed and scooped up the two pieces of animal with a snow shovel and threw them in the recycling bin, thunk-thunk. He wept and he wept, he who so loved animals in the way God so loved the world.

SHADY BALCOM

C.T.E.



# THE GREAT

Reduced to a grain among heaps,  
Diminished by the shadow of her grandeur,  
Where the wind gracefully sweeps

Granules of rock into bloody peaks.  
Where your father fabled of the oppressor  
Reduced to a grain among heaps.

Crying out in unmade screams,  
At the foot of a misplaced transgressor.  
Where the wind gracefully sweeps,

The smell of childhood, early May, streams  
into you from before you stood: A lone successor,  
Reduced to a grain among heaps.

Dancing in the sunset, those crimson gleams.  
The end of blessings you'd think about forever,  
Where the wind gracefully sweeps.

Our sand-lined eyes frame our dreams,  
Whether we become whole or  
Reduced to grains among heaps,  
Where the wind gracefully sweeps.

KATIE MARTINEZ

# ASH DUNES



The trees embrace me as I walk into their depths. I follow the dirt path, trailing behind the other hikers. Further into the trees that grow taller as I pass, blotting out the brightness of day. I try to keep my breathing even as the incline gets steeper and the trees get thicker. The view of the mountain ahead fades as the trees swallow the blue sky. After what always seems too long, Nymph Lake comes into view. Like a pond, it's covered in bright lily pads and surrounded by thick evergreen trees. Animals scurry around, a blue jay sings sweetly on a branch over the pond, a bright speck amongst the greens surrounding him. I steady my breath, send my greetings to the far too friendly chipmunks, and continue down the sturdy brown path. This path is always the same. The trees change color, and the air gets cooler, but the path stays hard and ever-present beneath my boots. My pace is even, making a rhythm against the ground, thumping along with my heart.

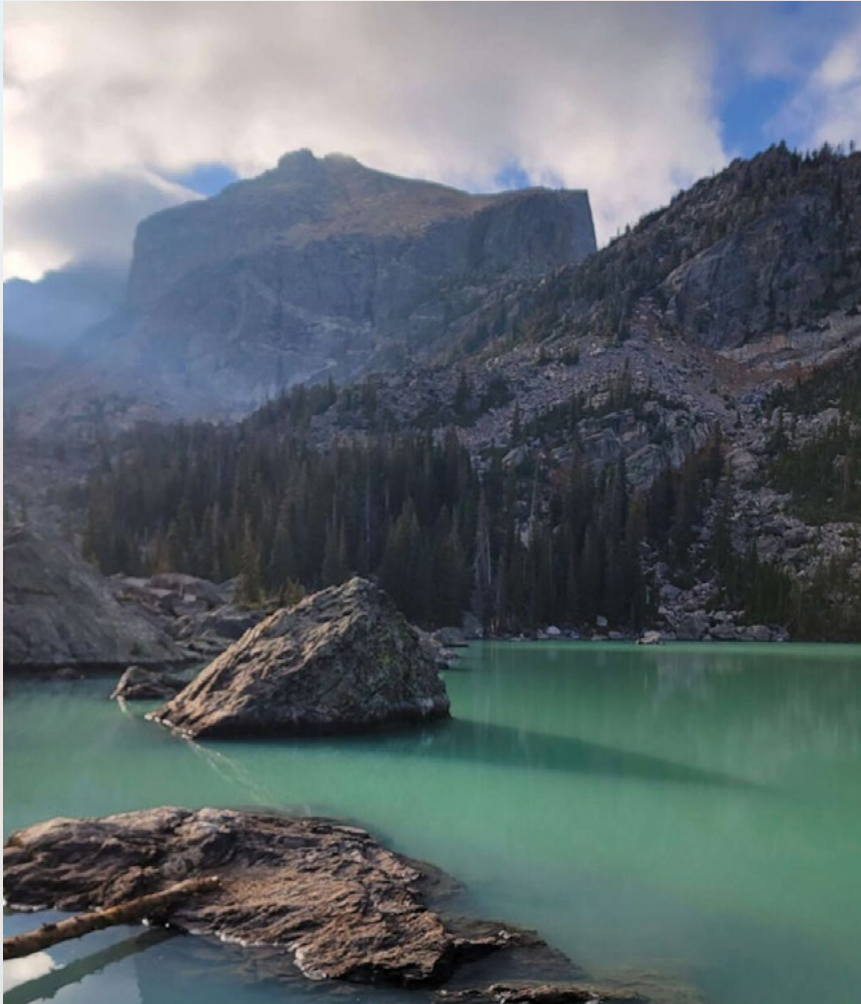
Past Nymph Lake, the soft dirt no longer covers the paths, there are sharp boulders scattering the hard-packed earth. The trees are opening up, drenched in more colors than what the soft conifers offer. Rich golden yellow joins the fray, and splatterings of vibrant purple wildflowers burst from dark stone cracks. Climbing higher with each step, I come to a fork in the road, the path continues forward, but to the left, there is a dizzying cliff. The trees thin out, and the horizon looms, radiantly blue over my head. The progress I've made pours into view as I walk closer to the ledge. The mountain always remains still, but I am the one who continues to make progress in my mind and in my surroundings. I can see Nymph Lake already so far away, minuscule compared to when I was just down there. The people are nothing but dots. And staring me in the face; the brilliant Rocky Mountains, giants of nature. Doused in golden sunlight and dressed in the fiery colors of autumn leaves. The town of

Estes peeks out, I can barely see it so far away, like a memory in the recesses of my mind. I feel at peace here, like whatever I deal with at a lower elevation cannot follow me here. The only thing I can acknowledge and appreciate, is the mountains beneath me and before me. Everything else is insignificant when my eyes fill with the sight of Dream Lake.

The sun dances across the crystal clear water, and animals can be found sprawled through the scene. Fish swim next to the shore, chipmunks skitter across the ground in front of my boots, and deer munch on grass in the distance. Deep breaths bring the scent of fresh pine and clear mountain air. A gentle wind blows the surface of the water. The brisk spray brushes against my face and arms. I bask in the warmth of the sun. My worries melt away, cleansed by my fresh surroundings. My heart slows, and my legs weaken slightly, relaxing after exertion. I'm already tired, my breath short, and my arms tense from heightened blood flow, but I turn from the magnificent sight before me and continue on the path ahead. There is more to see, more work to be done, and there isn't enough sun in the sky to stay in one spot forever.

# SEA OF COLOR

HALEY WILLIAMS



The trailhead of Lake Haiyaha starts with a steep incline, smothered in sharp boulders. No mercy for the weak. My feet stomp across rocks. Step after step. One after another. They pound with my heart. The rhythm of the mountain breathes. I breathe with it. I'm dragging, but the wind makes me feel like I'm soaring. With tight lungs and heart echoing in my hands, I make it to another cliff overlooking a vista. And stop.

I drown in the color of the mountains.

Surrounded by the rainbow of fall, the hard stone beneath my feet and brisk thin air fills my lungs. Estes Park is a sea of artistry at all times of the year, but fall is my favorite. The trees don the leaves of dying autumn, yet they've never looked more alive. The mountains are full of the brightest dawn yellow, the deepest red wine, and the burnt

orange of a warm campfire. Leaves scatter across the ground at the slightest brush. Walking along this solid gray path, they spark life and color everywhere they spread. Rocks and dirt clutter my path, dust rising in front of me and filling my nose with the scent of earth and pine. Deep green trees all around make the air fragrant.

The breeze rustles the leaves, and in the distance, a river is rushing, crashing against stones and carving a path in the mountain. The sun warms my face, illuminating the highest peaks and the brightest trees. It streams through the branches ahead, gleaming off the rocks and bark of the forest. I can hear the wind rushing around me, cooling the sweat on my forehead. The branches around me clatter and shimmer, breaking leaves free and allowing them to crack and crunch against the other trees and eventually under my feet. So much effort to get to a place as sublime as this. Attainable only through my own strength.

I sip my water, and it makes me thank the earth for providing such crisp vital refreshments for its creations. It's as cool in my throat as the breeze blowing in my hair. I look ahead of me, see how high up I am, and try to truly absorb how much beauty is around me all the way up here.



How can I see that beauty not only in the mountain but in my life too? When I leave this 'higher' place, will I carry its splendid spirit with me?

At the trail's end are the giant boulders surrounding Lake Haiyaha. They're cool to the touch, especially in the shade, and only interrupted by thick twisting trees whose roots disappear into the crevices of the boulders surrounding them. They work in harmony to create more of a challenge, making the people who climb the mountain work a little harder if they want a good spot to see the lake and the cliffs surrounding it.

After a grueling hike up to 10,240 feet, I feel far from successful. I've come so far but still have so much to do, but everything here always seems full of life and energy. I crave the satisfaction of seeing this tucked-away scene. Seeing my labor come to fruition, labor that rarely has a tangible reward elsewhere. I work slowly, one foot following the other and hands grasping steady spots as the boulders wobble and clatter against each other. My unsteady feet fit right in with these unstable boulders. The breeze is invigorating up here. The afternoon sun is warm but not blazing, it casts a glowing aura across the boulders and glimpses off the lake slowly

building ahead of me. I scale one last boulder and reach the precipitate I determined would be best to sit and take in the scene. I hang my feet over the edge, get out my snack, and take in the view.

My heart beats like a drum, not from exertion but pride, I've made it. My legs are relaxed after the exertion. My stomach is content with the fresh water. I take a deep breath of fresh pine and pristine air, and my head is just as cloudless as the scene in front of me. The sheer mountain seems to pour into the lake, shrouded in shadows and glittering evening rays of the sun setting behind the mountain.

Lake Haiyaha is a creamy, turquoise blue, not what it usually is. The color has been changed because of rock slides that happened last year. Now, it blends with the mountain and sun. Like through the feathers of a blue jay, catching the delicate color. The sun's warm rays meld with the water like fresh cream pouring into steaming black coffee. Illuminating it from the inside instead of shining on top of it, as it did at Dream Lake. It creates a whole new image, a new environment. So peculiar; but breathtaking all the same. It will eventually return to normal, but for now, the lake is a painted version of itself,

blended with the vibrant colors of fall, changing its color with the leaves. Going through seasons with the rest of the world and yet enduringly marvelous. I feel as though I'm going through my own seasons, changing in ways I'm not always aware of.

The way home is a breeze, downhill, and back to Nymph Lake in what seems like minutes. The final descent in the woods always seems so lonely, leaving behind all the sights that I can't truly capture in a picture. My gaze has a habit of falling on my feet, but I get the urge to look up into the deep green trees. There is a spark of color, the blue jay. It seems out of place, its sky-blue feathers like a bright blue flag among the green and brown. My feet beat closer to the tree it perches on, and it chirps sweetly. He hops along to the next tree. I follow him, pretending he's guiding me home, making the journey less lonesome. The jay seems to play along, leading me all the way to the trailhead.

When the baby blue sky can be seen past the trees, the jay takes to its matching feathers and disappears.









# FREE OUR FOOD

SCAN TO WATCH

**T**he search for ethically sourced food is a growing concern in today's society. Brenden Pachniak's short film introduces a new model of farming that could be a solution.

Regenerative agriculture is a form of farming that focuses on retaining nutrients and carbon in the soil.

"Because all these large-scale farms have gotten into the organic business, there has been a loss in integrity," said Cliff McGaville, owner of All Grass Farms.

On McGaville's farm, and in regenerative agriculture, the main focus is grazing; animals such as cows and chickens are free

to munch on all the decadent grass, clovers, and chicory they want. They then act as natural fertilizers and return the carbon, nutrients, and whatever remains to the land. This free form of farming promotes healthy, happy lifestyles for livestock and prevents the typical dirt rot seen at large 'efficient' farms.

Pachniak examines the work put into this form of farming and its benefits to those who participate in it. The strive towards ethical farming and true organic food requires hard work and dedication. While the work is often questioned because of high prices, McGaville's love for his work and the animals is evident. McGaville shares his want for people to think of quality over cost and to help farmers free their food.



# I AM NOTHING BUT A DANDELION

MADELINE TERLEP

I lie here in a bed of flowers  
flowers of the unloved  
counting the leaves  
one by one  
as if they are the reasons  
you didn't love me

I sway in the rustling wind  
my petals are brittle  
but the meadow is wide  
filled with colors  
matching the bruises  
you placed on my soul

I invite you to my home  
where I'm an unwanted weed  
dipped in the tangs of honey  
forgotten among the grasses  
nothing compared to the trees  
so you trampled my body

I was basking in the sun  
when you ripped me from the soil  
where I had grown  
harvested gifts  
special just for you  
yet you tossed me away

Because I am nothing  
but a dandelion to you





## Flourishing In Solitude

Graphite on Paper  
Ruth Alvarez

I want her back; I drag her forward

Hands in, I ask her to touch me  
one more time

Tell me what to do, heavenly  
ghost tell me what I must do

To make your absence into  
something more than gore,  
anything more

Than the glass shards I've offered  
up every October night and picked  
up each December morning

There's a window in the planch-  
ette and I peer through it

Straining to see through months  
of past longing and years of  
future loss

I saved myself for you, did you  
see it

No. The board answers

Do you feel the sun in my eyes,  
can you taste the baby fat of the  
new winter

No. The board answers

Do you remember my voice,  
does it ring in your ears and wake  
you each time you drift to sleep,  
and did you miss me when your  
heart lost hold of you

No. The board answers

Did your love for me cool in the  
clinical fluorescence of heaven, do  
you still love me like I love funeral  
flowers, in glimpses and whiffs

No. The board answers

Autumn is the bodily crash of the  
summer's seething carnage

THE OUIJA  
BOARD SAID  
I TOLD YOU SO'

GRACE MORRIS

And I see you in every pile of  
stale leaves that fail to rot

In every twist of graying clouds,  
full like organs in the slick stream  
of the sky

I hope you see me when you look  
around, see me bright in the flush  
of sunset

I hope you see me holding the  
biggest sign in the stadium of  
everyone who loved you

Glittered and glued in your  
favorite colors

Reading I want you back, Ava, I  
want it back

There is no answer.

I wait for you in every warm book-  
store, hoping to happen upon you  
again behind every shelf

I wait for you on the frozen train  
platform, hoping to see you be-  
fore the cars pass between us

I wait for you, do you wait for me

There is no answer.

I love you, I tell her just to hear it  
again. My hands lie still

I want her back; I drag her forward.



# E U R B E U

Golden ember flesh fabricates  
 The cracks between my bed,  
 Sealing the threshold between  
 Authenticity and Sandman's bluff.

Soggy pine playgrounds  
 Guide the passage of  
 Roller coasters through English ruins.  
*No respites*, as the sole path unfurls into

Sooty pastures glistening with torment.  
 Drudging through the cascading crystalline  
 dunes, I peer into the oasis, and discern  
 Coyote's mischievous waltz about the  
 moon.

Mesmerized by his gaze, I neglect  
 An iridescent orchid gliding through me.  
 Arising as a lute-sized mantis,  
 Spouting savory siren arias, alluring  
 Me to the land of los Muertos

Cempazúchitl carpets stream into ofrendas  
 Adorned with portraits of me. *No llores*,  
 Sing the dancing shell sisters,  
 Stirring my ignorant sleep.

I become immovable, melted glass  
 Blown into vessels, bearing the clear  
 Undulating rivers of space and time.  
 Through me, obsidian angels peer  
 ¿Es mi destino morir?

KATIE MARTINEZ



# THINGS

SARIYA CAMP

When the light streams in at a serendipitous angle –  
scraps of it cast over the carpet

like chicken bones  
shaken from the hand of a diviner –

that is when you come in,  
my stroke of luck rising to the hip.

You take my hand  
and moon eclipses sun

but it is I who am made small,  
insufficient. You walk me to the precipice,

Let's stand in a sunbeam, you say,  
and I surrender.

For the span of a breath, we are golden,  
cosmic. Then you are leaping again,

off to point at butterflies,  
to titter beside the window at the leaves,

stained ochre and loosed from their boughs –  
beauties I have forsaken.

You have a love of all things, and I,  
I love only you.





TEAM PHOTO











# Thank you.

For submission opportunities go to  
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